

DRAFT DELIBERATIVE DOCUMENT...Do not cite or quote
Communication Strategy
May 28, 2008

TITLE: Libby Community-Based Research Initiative (LCBRI)

VISIBILITY: Potential is high for local visibility (Montana, particularly Libby); national visibility potential is moderate to low

PROJECTED RELEASE: Week of June 9, 2008

ACTION: Announcement of a Libby Community-Based Research Initiative, resulting from a new memorandum of understanding (MOU) between EPA and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR).

GOAL: To put into context how this new research effort adds to previous and ongoing research focused on the cancer and non-cancer effects of exposure to Libby amphibole. In addition, the strategy should also put into context the relationship between the LCBRI and resources available for cleanup.

KEY MESSAGES:

ATSDR and EPA want to understand as much as possible about the health effects of Libby asbestos in order to do the best job of ensuring future good health among Libby residents.

Closing the knowledge gaps about the health effects of exposure to Libby amphibole asbestos will help ATSDR better advise EPA on clean-up strategies now and in the future.

Clean-up in Libby and surrounding communities continues to be a national priority for EPA, and public health information is critical for supporting the EPA mission.

The initiative is community based. Public health researchers will be located in the community and resources will be directed toward leveraging and working with local organizations that best understand the specific needs and concerns of the Libby community.

This research will provide new information about low-level exposures that can help doctors and others better respond to emerging health issues in populations that were exposed, especially those persons exposed to low-levels as children.

Knowledge gained from this research will provide information that will increase understanding of how better to prevent or mitigate exposures to Libby amphibole.

DRAFT DELIBERATIVE DOCUMENT...Do not cite or quote

This project will advance scientific knowledge about similar asbestos exposures in other settings (such as occupational exposures to similar fibers and non-commercial asbestos exposures in communities and their related health risks).

AUDIENCE:

Primary

- MT congressional delegation
- Libby CAG, TAG and other opinion leaders
- Libby elected officials (e.g., mayor, Board of County Commissioners)
- Libby health-care professionals (e.g., hospital, Center for Asbestos Related Disease (CARD), private practice physicians)
- State and local public health officials

Secondary

- Media (Local, MT regional)
- Universities and research organizations with research relationships to Libby (e.g., University of Cincinnati)
- Independent national asbestos researchers/experts

LEVEL OF INTEREST:

ATSDR/EPA expect the strongest interest in the announcement of their MOU and subsequent release of the research plan to occur at the local level. This local interest is acute due to the actual and potential asbestos-related health problems that are at the daily forefront of many Libby residents' minds and lives. As in the past, this interest may reflect strong concern about the relevancy of the proposed research to the residents' immediate health problems—problems that many believe local medical resources cannot address adequately. Relatedly, it is probable that the plan's release will reignite calls for a public health emergency declaration.*

Libby health-care workers and providers will view this project in a positive light overall. They may, however, share residents' relevancy concerns about the research. Nonetheless, they likely will be interested in the research and how their ongoing efforts will be coordinated with it.

There will also be substantial Congressional interest. This action represents the culmination of Administrator Johnson's public commitment to Senator Baucus offered during a Libby site visit in August 2007. At that time, the Administrator committed to contacting Secretary Leavitt to discuss the public health issues in Libby to see what EPA-HHS joint efforts could do to support further ongoing work. This announcement should be presented as being responsive to that

* Some Libby residents believe that, if EPA or ATSDR had declared a public health emergency declaration when the Libby vermiculite contamination was discovered, then those affected by asbestos exposure would have dedicated medical resources available to them.

DRAFT DELIBERATIVE DOCUMENT...Do not cite or quote

request. At the same time, it is important to understand that some members of the Libby community will view the initiative as being unresponsive to their request for subsidized health services.

Given the high degree of local interest, EPA anticipates that local and State media outlets will have strong interest in the research plan. This degree of interest may also be present in some national news organizations in light of past, somewhat numerous (all be it, sporadic) print stories, and television and radio segments about Libby.

Asbestos researchers generally and those universities that have conducted research tied to Libby also may have a keen interest in this project.

POTENTIAL ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT THE RELEASE

Briefings and Meetings

- Congressional briefing(s)
- Community Advisory Group (CAG) and Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) Group briefings.
- News release and local media briefing (in collaboration with MDoH)
- Local press interviews

Collateral Materials

- Key messages and talking points
- PowerPoint or other presentation for group meetings
- Desk statement (EPA)
- Web pages
 - Add section to existing Libby landing page (ATSDR)
- 2-4-page fact sheet describing program
- FAQs

Internal Communication

- Signing ceremony: Leavitt/Johnson?, Bodine/Falk-Frumkin?

DRAFT DELIBERATIVE DOCUMENT...Do not cite or quote
COMMUNICATION CONTACTS

- **ATSDR:**

Jana Telfer, Associate Director for Communication Science, NCEH/ATSDR, (404) 509-4793 (cell)

Jeff Dimond, Health Communication Specialist, NCEH/ATSDR Office of Communication, (770) 488-0585

- **EPA:**

Marsha Minter, Director of Innovations, Partnerships and Communications Office, OSWER, (202) 566-0215

Lois Gartner, Senior Communications Specialist, OSRTI/OSWER, (703) 603-8711

Ted Linnert, Community Involvement Coordinator, Region 8 Office of Communications & Public Involvement, (303) 312-6119

IMPLEMENTATION:

Implementation of this strategy will be multi-faceted and primarily conducted at the local level in Libby. However, congressional outreach should precede a community announcement. Congressional outreach should involve ATSDR and EPA officials at an appropriate level of seniority (i.e., Susan Bodine and Howard Frumkin).

Within 24 hours of the Congressional briefings, it is recommended that briefings occur for key opinion leaders in the Libby community (e.g., CAG, TAG, local elected officials, local health care professionals). An established meeting cycle places most of these meetings in the second week of each month. It is recommended that a special briefing occur to which organizational members are invited, the follow-up questions could be fielded at meetings occurring as the week progresses.

EPA and ATSDR staff with extensive community experience may be sought to recommend whether an additional public availability session would be advisable to reach the broader community in a more personalized fashion.

A news release and media briefing are recommended to frame the story for local and regional media.

Announcements of the project will subsequently be sent to academic and public health research organizations.

DRAFT DELIBERATIVE DOCUMENT...Do not cite or quote

TIMING: Announcement of the EPA/ATSDR MOU is expected to occur early in the summer of 2008. (A tentative date of Tuesday, June 10 is proposed for the Congressional briefing, with community briefings occurring on Wednesday, June 11; however, dates may be subject to change.)

Date	Action	Responsible	Status	Comments
May 9	Circulate initial draft of communication strategy within OSRTI and Reg 8 CIC	Gartner	√	Sent to: Ammon, Michaud, Johnson, Southerland, Linnert, Clark and ATSDR: Telfer
May 9	Draft ATSDR/EPA MOU prepared	Ammon	√	Need to determine process to finalize MOU and if MOU needs to be final before announcement
May 20	Incorporate ATSDR and OSRTI comments and circulate second draft	Gartner	√	Send to: Ammon, Michaud, Johnson, Southerland, Linnert, Hull, Minter, Deitz, ATSDR
May 20	Conference call to discuss coordination of communication strategy	Barnes	√	Call with Howard Frumkin, Johnson, Gartner, Ammon, Southerland
May 21	Secure agreement on key messages	Gartner/Dimond		Send to Williamson/Meiburg at ATSDR
May 23	Circulate initial draft of PowerPoint presentation (congressional, community, healthcare providers)	Jayne Michaud	√	
	Circulate initial draft of Qs/As on research project and overall Libby cleanup	Gartner/Linnert/Dimond		
	Circulate draft desk statement/press release	Gartner/Dimond	√	
	Circulate draft fact sheet	Dimond		

5/19/2008

DRAFT DELIBERATIVE DOCUMENT...Do not cite or quote

Date	Action	Responsible	Status	Comments
	on overall Libby research effort			
May 28	Incorporate comments on presentations and circulate for additional comments	Gartner/Dimond		
	Incorporate Qs/As comments and circulate for additional comment	Gartner/Dimond		
	Incorporate comments on draft desk statement/press release and circulate	Gartner/Dimond		
	Incorporate comments on draft fact sheet and circulate	Gartner/Dimond		
June 5	Prepare Web site in dev server	Lopez		
June 6	Schedule Congressional briefing(s) – Baucus, Tester, Rehberg	CDC-W; Amy Hayden (EPA OCIR)		
	Schedule community briefing and meeting(s)	EPA Region VIII		
TTJ June 10	Conduct Congressional Briefing(s)			
June 11-12	Conduct community meetings			
	Issue press release			
	Media availability session			
	Paid print announcement			

DRAFT DELIBERATIVE DOCUMENT...Do not cite or quote

SITE BACKGROUND:

Libby is set in a picturesque valley carved by the Kootenai River and framed by the Cabinet Mountains at the northwest corner of Montana, just 35 miles east of Idaho and 65 miles south of Canada. The town has a population of less than 2,900; 12,000 people live within a ten-mile radius.

In November 1999, EPA sent an Emergency Response Team to Libby as the result of local concern and news articles about asbestos-contaminated vermiculite that was mined near town by the W.R. Grace Corporation. EPA's first priority was to assess the risk to public health with respect to asbestos contamination and eliminate the major sources of asbestos in the community. The mine has been inactive since 1990 and the public has not been allowed on the Grace property for several years.

In 2002, the Libby Asbestos Site was added to the NPL and 3,000+ properties were inspected and sampled. By October of 2007, 950+ properties have had asbestos removed and significant toxicity studies had been initiated to complete the Baseline Risk Assessment. Investigations have begun in the neighboring town of Troy (OU 7), at the mine site (OU 3), and at various processing areas (OUs 1, 2, 5, & 6).

EPA continues to work with the community to take the necessary actions to protect human health and the environment.